



Primary School

Policy Document: Policy on Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is an international problem that knows no class, distinction, ethnic boundaries or age.

Statement of Intent:

It is a basic right of all learners to receive their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse and to learn in an atmosphere free from fear that ensures their safety and security. SAHETI acknowledges and attends to this responsibility with utmost respect and commitment. To this end, this policy has been developed and implemented from an integrated, systemic, strategic, positive and pragmatic approach in a collaborative attempt to confront the serious issue of bullying on a consistent and continuous basis. This includes multi-disciplinary detection, investigation, prevention and management of bullying.

Policy Statement

SAHETI will not tolerate the bullying of any member of the school community and SAHETI as a School is a no-bully zone.

Policy Aims

- To ensure the safety of **all school members** where respect for the value and integrity of **all** is upheld;
- To promote an environment in which **all** school members maintain an ethos of understanding, appreciation and acceptance of unique differences amongst individuals and to cultivate empathy and feelings of positive regard for **every** individual, the community and the environment. We **all** have a right to human dignity;
- To promote a culture of education on the definition of bullying; the types of behaviours which may be classified as bullying which will not be tolerated; reporting and investigating bullying; applicable appropriate disciplinary sanctions; and consequences for persistent breaches of this policy;
- To assure that SAHETI takes bullying very seriously and assert that it is everyone's right to report bullying of any kind;
- To empower survivors of bullying to feel confident to implement this policy and to trust that the procedures outlined therein will be followed to effectively end the bullying;
- To empower witnesses to report bullying so that they may act on the care and compassion they feel for others.
- To enhance the consistency of the approach towards addressing bullying and modifying behaviour;
- To engender support and respect by **all** for the administration and implementation of this policy;
- To ensure that the organisation, administration and practices within the school will reflect SAHETI's commitment to the prevention of bullying.

Definition of Bullying

"A learner being exposed, repeatedly and over time, to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more learners. Bullying also implies an imbalance of power or strength in which one child is victimized by another" Olweus (1993). Bullying is thus deliberate, unprovoked, hurtful behaviour by one or more children against another repeated over a period of time and meant to cause harm.

This may include but is not limited to the following:

Physical:

- Physical contact: hitting, slapping, tripping, pushing, choking, hair pulling, biting;
- Making obscene gestures or facial expressions; deliberately ignoring;
- Intentionally excluding or ostracising another learner from the peer group;
- Extortion or stealing of money and possessions (theft) or damaging property or possessions.

Verbal:

- Verbal assault, taunts, insults, name calling, put downs, ridiculing, teasing;
- Prejudiced remarks (racial or sexist);
- Blackmailing;
- Threats and intimidation.
- Spreading rumours, graffiti slander, playing nasty jokes, mimicking, damaging social reputation.

Sexual:

- Unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature.
- Homophobic or focused on the issue of sexuality.

Cyber:

- Internet, email, website and internet chat room misuse;
- Threats or intimidation via mobile text messaging and calls.
- Misuse of associated technology i.e. camera and video facilities.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE AND ACTIONS

SAHETI expects a high standard of behaviour and good conduct at all times. To this end, a stepwise, sequential approach is implemented to address bullying:

STEP 1

- Any individual or child who is bullied or who witnesses bullying behaviour at school must report the incidents to the class teacher.
- All reports will be treated with strict confidentiality, investigated thoroughly and dealt with promptly and effectively.
- All parties involved will be provided with an opportunity to express their experience of the circumstances and all discussions will be documented in writing.
- At this point, discussion is limited to the class teacher who may thereafter consult with other support staff on a multi-disciplinary team at his/her discretion.
- The type and extent of intervention will be dependent on a number of factors including the severity of the event.
- A record will be kept and parents will be notified accordingly of the event and that the learner will be placed on daily report, the duration of which will be determined by the multi-disciplinary team.
- If a group dynamic is identified, the Primary School Psychologist will be informed and a psycho-educational workshop may be organized should this is deemed necessary.
- SAHETI will deal seriously with those who retaliate against any individual for reporting bullying.

STEP 2

- Should the same child/children continue to demonstrate unacceptable behaviour, a Type 2 demerit will be issued and recorded, resulting in attendance at Friday afternoon detention.
- The respective Grade Controller and the parents will be notified of the offence.
- Should it be deemed applicable and beneficial, the respective learner may be required to attend one or more consultations with the Primary School Psychologist as part of the School's attempt to apply appropriate sanctions and to modify the learner's unacceptable behaviour. These sessions will be initiated once parents' consent has been provided in writing.
- For both Step 1 and Step 2, efforts will be made to reconcile the learners involved where possible. In addition, these cases will be monitored closely to ensure that repeated incidents (bullying) do not occur.

STEP 3

- Continued unacceptable behaviour (bullying) will result in a one-day suspension.
- Parents will be notified in writing of the offence which the learner has allegedly committed and requested to attend a disciplinary meeting with the Vice-Principal, Grade Controller, Class Teacher, Primary School Psychologist and the respective learner to discuss the offence and appropriate suggestions for the way forward. The date, time and venue of the meeting will be communicated to parents in writing.
- The disciplinary hearing will be conducted promptly and according to procedurally fair rules. This includes but is not limited to the right to be heard and represented or assisted by an adult.
- The final decision rests with the disciplinary committee whose findings will be communicated to the learner and his/her parents in writing.
- Further disciplinary measures, including permanent exclusion from the School or expulsion, may be imposed should the sanctioned behaviour continue.
- If a learner or parent is not in accordance with the disciplinary decision reached, s/he may appeal to the Principal or chairperson of the School's Executive Board in writing.
- The principal or governing body will appoint an appeal committee and arrange for an appeal to be heard within 14 days, unless otherwise agreed to by the parties involved.
- The learner will have the right to be represented or assisted by an adult.
- Individuals serving on the appeal committee will not have served on the original disciplinary committee which found the learner to be guilty. Thus the hearing of an appeal shall be conducted according to fair administrative practice and to this end the School may enlist the services of a legal representative.

Recommended Procedure To Be Followed For Parents:

1. Report bullying to the class teacher as soon as possible or alternatively to the head coach if the bullying is occurring during extra mural sport.
2. If bullying continues, request an appointment with the Grade Controller or Head of Sport. Should you feel that your concerns have not been addressed adequately, request an appointment with the Vice-Principal where after you are requested to make an appointment with the Principal should you continue to be left feeling dissatisfied.
3. Try to keep in mind that there are many explanations for why and how a situation has arisen and be prepared to hear other versions of what may have happened. This can be a very emotional time for you as the parent and it is understandable that you will want to seek justice for your child as well as yourself. Nevertheless it is crucial that you work hard to maintain objectivity in as far as is possible.
4. Please trust that as a School, we will endeavour to serve the best interests of your child at all times.
5. We ask that you refrain from bringing outside incidents to the attention of the School e.g. altercations at birthday parties, social events, external extra mural activities, etc.
6. We urge you to cooperate with the School. Once a course of action has been decided, give the school sufficient time to implement it.
7. Please resist your desire to assume the position of the law. Refrain from harassing or intimidating any child on the school premises. Doing so will only aggravate the circumstances and destroy any attempts at reconciliation, an active stance in community responsibility to which SAHETI subscribes.

The Bullying Policy forms part of the general Code of Conduct of The School and consequently The School reserves the right to implement this policy at any point to address any form of behaviour which goes against SAHETI's values and which may even contravene the rights listed in the human rights charter contained within The South African Constitution.

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